THE

DISSENTERS

Vindicated from the

Violent Aſperſions

Caſt on their

Principles and *Doctrine.*

PROVING

Their *SEPARATION* is not occaſion'd thro' *Obſtinacy*; but by Convincing Evidence from *Scripture* and *Right Reaſon.*

Inſcrib'd to Dr. H. SACHEVERELL.

LETTER the Firſt,

Setting forth the Nature of SCHISM, *and that the* Diſſenters *cannot be charg'd therewith.*

LONDON,

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Sach. 261/1

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THE DISSENTERS Vindicated, &c.

In a LETTER to Dr. *Sacheverell.*

SIR,

YOU having diſtinguiſh'd your ſelf in ſo remarkable a Manner againſt the *Diſſenters*, and beſtow'd many ſevere and furious Appellations on all thoſe, whoſe *Conſciences* are not ſo pliable to their *Intereſt*, as to give into all the Forms of the *Church* of *England* as *by Law eſtabliſh'd*; you ſeem to me to be the fitteſt Perſon to addreſs this Diſcourſe of *SCHISM* to, as well, as what we ſhall hereafter think fit to publiſh, in the Vindication of that abuſed People, from the unjuſt Calumnies, which, you, and your fiery Followers, have been pleaſed to utter againſt them.

'Tis true, I ſhall not take much Notice of your *Sermon* on the 5th of *November*, in which, you have vouchſaf'd to give us all to the *Devil*; becauſe you have been ſo diffi-

dent in your Cauſe, as not to give any Argument, or produce one Reaſon to prove the *Diſſenters SCHISMATICS*, and have thought it ſufficient to rail, and not to reaſon. I have, therefore, from others pick'd up thoſe frail Arguments, which they have thought fit to produce, as well, as all ſuch as I have met withal in Perſonal Diſputes. If they are weak, I ſuppoſe, you will be rous'd by this, to diſcover ſome that are more weighty and ſtrong; when you do, I may venture, without much Vanity, to promiſe as ſtrong a Confutation of them.

Nothing has more naturally tempted the Incautious into the Erroneous Opinion, that there is no ſuch Thing as *Schiſm* at all, than the furious Conduct of ſome fiery, angry Gentlemen, who have endeavour'd to make every thing ſo.

For my part, I never cou'd yet find, but that all Men, who own the Goſpel, and have any Regard to the Peace and Proſperity of the Church, or the Propagation of Truth, always have allow'd, that a *Cauſeleſs* Separation from a particular Church of Chriſt, of which we have been once *duly Members*, is a Sin of a deep Dye: But on the other hand, we muſt not be of ſo laviſh a Credulity, as to believe that *every Departure* is that *heinous Thing*, which paſſionate Men in hot Blood, out of Prejudice to the Perſons of others, or a Neceſſity of Securing, and Eſtabliſhing their own Acquiſitions over the Conſciences of Men, are reſolv'd to call ſo.

The Learned *Hales*, with great Judgment, calls it *One of thoſe Theological Scare-Crows*,

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with which, thoſe, who uſe to uphold a Party in Religion uſe it to fright ſuch, as making any Enquiry into it, are ready to relinquiſh and oppoſe it, if it appear either erroneous, or ſuſpicious. Some of your furious Party have endeavour'd to confound us with a Quotation from St. *Cyprian, affirming it to be of ſo horrible a Guilt, that Martyrdom was not a ſufficient Expiation of it.* St. *Cyprian* might have ſaid the ſame in Relation to any other Sin, ſince we cannot find in any Part of the *Goſpel*, that *Martyrdom* was ever deſign'd by JESUS for the Expiation of Sin; but to bear Witneſs to the Truth of the Lord. However, the ſame *Cyprian* will in another Place inform us, that *Plebs obſequens Præceptis Dominicis, & Deum metuens, a Peccatore Præpoſito ſeparare ſe debet. A People fearing God, and conſcientiouſly obeying his Commands* (not only *may*, but) *ought to ſeparate themſelves from a ſcandalous, and wicked Paſtor.* From hence it is beyond Controverſy plain, that ſuch a Separation is not, in his Judgment, that *Schiſm*, which *Martyrdom* will not expiate.

The true Reaſon, why *Separation* in the Scripture, and purer primitive Times, was eſteem'd a *Crime ſo unpardonable*, was, becauſe the Church made no other Terms of Communion but what Chriſt himſelf had made. The *Superintendents* in thoſe Days durſt not venture the Churches Peace on ſo ſandy a Foundation, as her *own Inventions*, turn'd into *Impoſitions*: For if the Terms of Communion be of *Man's making*, the *Separation* that follows will be likewiſe of *Man's making*; and whether a Church has Power firſt to *make*

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a *Sin*, and then to make it *damnable*, I have very great Reason to question.

Let nothing be declar'd *Schism*, but what the *Scriptures* have made so, and we are content, that it be made as great a Sin, as any one of our Enemies shall desire.

For this Cause (says a furious Author) *it pleas'd God, that his Church in those early Days shou'd rather be harrass'd with Persecutions, which made it unite itself the closer, and paring off all Superfluities, kept to the necessary and essential Doctrines deliver'd to it; than to be soften'd, and made wanton by Ease, and so corrupt the Simplicity of the Gospel.* To this I shall reply, that let a Church return to the *Simplicity of the Gospel*, let her repent of that Softness, and Wantonness of Spirit, which by Ease she has contracted; let her pare off all Superfluities, and keep close to the Necessary, and Essential Doctrines deliver'd to it, and there wou'd not be one among us, but wou'd write as strong Invectives against *Schism* as any.

Tho' we are all convinc'd, that real *Schism* is a most detestable Impiety, yet to raise a greater Aversion in us to it, it may not be amiss to listen to such Reasonings of some of our Adversaries, as must empty all the Conventicles more effectually than the Abrogation of the *Act of Toleration*, so great a Grievance in the Eye of the *Examiner*, and your Learned Self.

None (says the fore-quoted Author) *can doubt of this, who considers what Care our Saviour took to prevent it; what Pains He took with his Apostles, that they might be instructed, and not differ in the Delivery of his Mind to the*

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World. We do, with all humble Thankfulneſs, acknowledge the ſacred Care of our Saviour in *Inſtructing*, and the Application of the Apoſtles in following *thoſe Inſtructions.* They deliver'd to the Churches the *whole Counſel of God*, Acts 20. 27. and ſo *only the Counſel of God*, 1 Cor. 11. 23. *I receiv'd of the Lord, that, which I deliver'd unto you.* And let but the Paſtors of the Church imitate theſe Patterns, keep exactly to their Inſtructions from the Lord *Chriſt*, which, we can by no Means think inſufficient to attain the Ends of Unity and Peace (elſe had they not been *ſufficiently inſtructed*) and either we ſhall have no *Separations*, or the Caſe will be ſo plain, the *Separation* ſo evidently *Schiſm*, that the *Schiſmatics* will not be able to cover their groſs Prevarication. But when Ambaſſadors *throughly inſtructed in all Means* to prevent that Evil, ſhall go beyond their Inſtructions, and impoſe new, and unheard-of Terms of Communion, I muſt beg Leave to affirm, that they are not Ambaſſadors; and by conſequence a Refuſal to comply with them in thoſe Impoſitions, cannot be wreſted to an Affront, but muſt be eſteem'd a Fidelity to him, who entruſted them with thoſe Diſpatches. And if *Chriſt*'s Inſtructions given to his Apoſtles to prevent this Evil, ſhou'd by theſe Gentlemen be aſſerted inſufficient to obtain this End, I am afraid, that they will find but a very poor Aſſiſtance from having Recourſe to *Men* for *fuller Inſtructions.*

But to prove the Greatneſs of the Sin, it is obſerv'd, *That the Apoſtles were induſtrious to reſiſt all Beginnings of Schiſm in every Church, to*

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heal *all Breaches, and to take away all* Occaſions *of Diviſion, to* unite *all Hearts, and* reconcile *all Minds.* But then I muſt reply, that they either are not Succeſſors to the Apoſtles in their healing Spirit, or elſe have diſcover'd ſome Reaſons of Weight and Importance to depart from their Opinion of the *Hainouſneſs of that Sin,* who, inſtead of taking away the *Occaſions of Diviſions* they have given, or removing theſe Stumbling-blocks out of the Way of *Union,* which they had laid, do add to the Number.

There is a third Proof againſt *Schiſm,* produc'd from the Lovelineſs of Unity. *It is not* (ſays one of them) *the Sublimity of the Chriſtian Doctrine, nor the Glorioufneſs of the Hopes it propoſes, that will ſo recommend it to the Opinion, and Eſteem of Beholders, as when it ſhall be ſaid,* Ecce! ut Chriſtiani amant; *When they ſhall obſerve the Love, Concord and Unanimity among the Profeſſors of it.* Theſe Words have unawares really ſtumbled on the formal Reaſon of *Schiſm,* or *Sinful Separation,* which lies not in the Variety of Opinions, or differing Practices, Modes, or Forms of Worſhip; but a *Want* of *True Love* and *Charity.* That, which renders *Chriſtianity* truly beautiful, and amiable in the Eyes of the Beholders, is, that it teaches its Profeſſors to love one another with a *pure Heart fervently,* tho' under different Perſuaſions, as to Modes of Divine Worſhip, and Diſcipline: That their Hearts are larger to receive one anothers Perſons, than their Heads are to receive one anothers Notions. But yet as he is but a fond, and imprudent Lover, that

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chooſes his Wife by the Eye, for the Symmetry of her External Frame, or Cloathing of wrought Gold, rather, than for thoſe Vertues, that adorn the Soul; ſo he, who chooſes his Religion by *Senſe*, and not by *Faith*, will make a moſt lamentable Bargain. He, that falls in Love with *Chriſt's Church* on external Allurements, and extrinſic Motives, will either repent, or quit his Choice, when She is perſecuted, her outward Frame diſcompos'd, her Order violated, the *Shepherd ſmitten*, and the *Sheep ſcatter'd*. Whereas he, who eſpouſes Religion for thoſe inviſible Glories which it propoſes, and keeps in his ſteady Eye the *Recompence of Reward*, will adhere to his Choice, when She is *moſt black*, and the *Sun of Perſecution has look'd too familiarly upon her*.

But without troubling my ſelf, or my Reader, with any more of ſuch fine Arguments, *Schiſm is an Evil*, whether you, Sir, be angry at it, or not; and *Separation may be good*, whether you are pleas'd, or not. All the Queſtion will be, that ſince it is too evident to be deny'd, that there is a Separation amongſt us, from the Political Part of the Church of *England*, and ſuppoſing, that there is Sin one where, or other, where the Guilt of it ought to lie. I meet with one of your Brethren, who has ſpoken a great deal in a few Words. ----- *That ſome have found Pleaſure to get the Child, which they wou'd, by no Means, have laid at their own Doors.* A ſucceſsful Piece of Villany it is, which ſometimes paſſes for a Virtue; for the Fathers, who have begot theſe Brats, to expoſe them to be maintain'd at

the Coſt of the poor innocent Pariſh. And if we might gheſs at the true Father, by the Features of the Child, all the Diviſions, that have ſo heavily charg'd the Churches, having ſprung from Ceremonies, from needleſs Impoſitions, from unneceſſary Terms of Communion; they, who take ſuch Pleaſure to beget the one, may be preſum'd to be the Grand-Fathers of the other.

But I think, it is now high Time to come to the ſettling of the *true Notion of Schiſm*: A Point that deſerves to be handled with the greateſt Exactneſs, for upon the true ſtating of this, the whole Controverſy depends. Your Friends, Sir, have given us this Notion, or Definition of *Schiſm*, viz. *Schiſm is a voluntary Departing, or Separation of one's ſelf without juſt Cauſe giv'n from that Chriſtian Church, of which he was once a Member.* Or, *Schiſm is the Breach of that Communion, in which a Man might have continu'd without Sin.* I have no great Occaſion to find Faults, or pick Holes in this Definition, they will offer themſelves very viſibly, as your good Friend opens, and explains the Terms. I ſhall only by the Way, obſerve

1. That it offends againſt one of the ſacred Laws of Definition, which ought moſt religiouſly, and inviolably to be obſerved; *Definitiones debent cum definito reciprocari, The Definition ought to be convertible with the Thing defin'd*; but that this is not ſo, is evident, becauſe there may be a Schiſm, where there is no Separation from *external Communion*; there is a *Schiſm* in a Church, as well as from a Church. The Churches Garment may be rent, and yet not rent in two. Thus the A-

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poſtle, 1 *Cor.* 11. 18. *When you come together in the Church, I hear there are Diviſions among you.* ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπαρχειν. Chap. 12. Ver. 25. *That there may be no Schiſm in the Body.* ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι. That Definition, that leaves out thoſe who ought to be taken in, muſt neceſſarily be ſtark naught.

2. This Definition is very ſhort, in expreſſing that, which is, indeed, the Poiſon, and Venom, the formal Reaſon of all Schiſmatical Departure, *viz.* the *Want of Charity*, and *Evangelical Love*; for he that departs from a Society, yet loves the real Chriſtians therein, and the Society itſelf, ſo far as it is a Church of Chriſt's Inſtitution, only he loves his own Soul with a more intenſe Love, and accordingly makes the beſt Proviſion for it he can; and wou'd rejoyce, that others wou'd accept of the ſame Advantages, ought not to be call'd a *Schiſmatic*; but if they, who pretend to a Power of Stamping what Significations they pleaſe upon Words, will call him ſo, the beſt is, no *Nick-Names* will prejudice him in the Sight of that God, who *ſearches the Heart*, and *tryeth the Reins*. As *Hereſy* is oppos'd to *Faith*, ſo is *Schiſm* oppos'd to *Love*, and Hereſy, and Schiſm are diſtinguiſh'd by thoſe Things, to which each of them is oppos'd.

3. 'Tis faulty for its Ambiguity, becauſe he tells us not what the Chriſtian Church is, from whence the Departure muſt be made, to denominate it Schiſmatical. If he means a *particular Congregation*, united under its proper Paſtor, according to the Laws of *Chriſt*, it will prove it to be Schiſmatical, to depart from a Church of the *Non-Conformiſts*. If he

underſtands a National Church, he ſhou'd do well to prove, that ſuch a Church is of *Chriſt*'s Inſtitution. But I ſhall wave theſe, and many Things more, 'till he has diſcanted on the Particulars of his own Definition.

I call it (ſays he) *a Departure, or Separation from the Society of the Church, to diſtinguiſh it from other Sins, which, tho' they are Breaches of the Laws of our Religion, and conſequently of the Church, yet are not a Renunciation of the Society. There may be ſuch a Perſon, who for his wicked Ways, deſerves to be caſt out of the Church, as being a Scandal, and Diſhonour to it, yet neither ſeparating himſelf, nor being caſt out of the Society, remaining ſtill a Member of it.* This is, indeed, too true, and hence it is, that many Churches are ſo over-run with ſcandalous Debauchees, that there is very little Difference between the Garden pal'd in, and the wide Wilderneſs; and perhaps, if there were more of this *Authoritative Separation*, there wou'd be leſs of the Prudential Separation.

I call it (continues he) *a voluntary Separation, to diſtinguiſh the Sin from Puniſhment, or Schiſm from Excommunication.* But he ought to have call'd it voluntary on a higher Account, in Oppoſition to ſuch Departure, as is made with *Regret* and *Reluctancy*. For when a ſincere Chriſtian has us'd all due Means, to inform himſelf of the Truth of ſuch a *Principle*, or the Lawfulneſs of ſuch a *Practice*, as may be made the Conditions of Communion with that Society; when he has ask'd Advice of God in his Word; when he has pray'd with *David*, that God wou'd open his Eyes; when he has confer'd with the moſt judicious, and impartial

impartial *Christians*; and when he has humbly, and modeſtly repreſented to the Paſtors, and Governours of the Church the ſuſpected Condition, or Innovation crept into the Church, and yet can neither procure Reformation of the Abuſe, nor Toleration of his particular Non-compliance; nor yet find Satisfaction of the Lawfulneſs of ſuch a Practice, he may, without Guilt, withdraw himſelf from that Society; nor ought this to be charg'd on him as a *Departure, having in it any thing of ſinful Voluntarineſs.* When a Merchant throws his Lading over-Board to preſerve his Life, I grant, he may be ſaid to throw it away *willingly*, becauſe his precious Life preponderates all with him, and turns the Scale of the Will, yet ſure no Man will condemn ſuch a Merchant for having too little Value for his Merchandize. Thus when a Chriſtian can find no Reſt, no Satisfaction to his Conſcience from thoſe *ſuſpected Conditions*, which in the conſtant Exerciſe of his Communion do recur, and ſhall recede from that Society, joining himſelf to another where he may perſue his own Edification with full Satisfaction of Spirit, ſuch an One ought not to be charg'd with a *Voluntary Departure*; nor will it be charg'd on him, in the Judgment of him who ſhall judge the World.

Your worthy Friend goes on in this Manner, *I call it a Departure from a particular Church, or from a Part of the Viſible Church, to diſtinguiſh it from Apoſtacy, which is the Caſting off the whole Religion, the Name, and Profeſſion of Chriſtianity.* Here his Definition is defective, ſince he ought to have defin'd it *a*

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Departure from a particular Church of Chriſt, to diſtinguiſh it from *ſuch a Conſtitution*, as is either no particular Church of Chriſt's Inſtitution; or none *ſo far as the Separation is made from it*; Such an One as is not united under Chriſt's Officers, nor conjoin'd by Chriſt's Ligaments. Chriſt has taken peculiar Care, that there may be *no Schiſm in the Body*, 1 Cor. 12. 25. and to this End; he has commanded *a Spirit of mutual Forbearance and Condeſcention*. He has temper'd the Body with ſuch exact Proportion, that each of the Parts may take Care of the other. To this End he likewiſe inſtituted ſome *Extraordinary Officers*, whoſe Work and Office were to ceaſe, when the preſent Exigence, and Occaſion was no more; and he likewiſe inſtituted *Ordinary* Officers, whoſe Office and Employment (as the Reaſons of them) were to be *perpetual*.

Now if any Society of Men calling themſelves a Church, (and in the chief Reſpects being really ſo) retaining the great Doctrines of Chriſtianity, and ſuch Ordinances, by which Salvation is attainable, ſhall yet put it ſelf under other Officers, than thoſe appointed by Chriſt, and practice other Ordinances, than he has inſtituted, and make Communion with her impracticable, unleſs by ſubmitting to ſuch Officers, and ſuch Ordinances, *Separation from that Society, can be no Separation from a particular Church of Chriſt*; becauſe tho' they may be ſuch a Church in the main, yet ſo far as the Separation is made, they are not ſo; and *They* deny Communion with them, *ſo far as they are a Church*

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of Chriſt, on any One's not ſubmitting to them ſo far as they are not a Church of Chriſt; that is, ſo far as they have ſet up other Officers, and admitted other Ordinances, than were inſtituted by Chriſt, as far as we can diſcover by the Word of Chriſt itſelf.

This ſame Gentleman proceeds (Doctor) and ſays —— *I add theſe Words, WHEREOF HE WAS ONCE A MEMBER; becauſe Schiſm imports Diviſion, and making two of that which was but one before.* By this Way of reaſoning, if an Act were made to divide ſome of our greater Pariſhes (many of them much larger than ſome of the primitive Dioceſſes) into two, under their diſtinct Paſtors, this muſt be a *Schiſm*, according to this excellent Definition. For, here is, 1. A voluntary Departure. 2. From a particular Church. 3. Whereof they were once all Members. And wherein 4. They might all have continu'd without Sin.

But the moſt important Thing here will be, How I became a Member of that Church; from which the Departure is ſuppos'd to be made. For, 1. To be forc'd into a Church, will never make one ſuch a Member, but that I may reſume my Liberty, and Right, when the Force is remov'd. 2. Baptiſm alone will not do it; becauſe, as I conceive, that Ordinance ſolemnly unites me only to the *Catholic Viſible Church*, and not to any particular *Congregation*; otherwiſe, whenever the Providence of God ſhall tranſplant me into another *particular Church*, I muſt be *rebaptiz'd*. 3. Nor will any, being born, and bred

bred within National Limits, and Precincts, denominate me a Member of ſuch a National Church, or Conſtitution, becauſe it paſſes for a current Maxim, that *the Church is in the Common-wealth*, and therefore, *Church* and *Kingdom*, *Church-Member*, and *Subject*, are not Terms of equal Dimenſions, and Extent. To make a Man, therefore, 4. A Member of a particular Church, there muſt be the Concurrence of his own free Choice, which, whether it ought to be ſignify'd by expreſs, and overt Acts, or, that an implicite, and tacite Conſent may ſuffice, is here no Time to diſcourſe.

But the only Difficulty (indeed the greateſt) is that which he thus ſubjoins in a few Words ---- *An unneceſſary Separation, or without juſt Cauſe*; or *to ſeparate from the Society, wherein I may continue without Sin*: Two Extreams, it ſeems, there are then.

1. The *firſt*, of *the Zealots of the Church of* Rome, *who ſcarce allow any Thing to be a ſufficient Cauſe of Separation*. But I look on this, as a very unjuſt Surmize on the *Romaniſts*; for their moſt rigid Zealots will, in the *general*, allow *ſinful Conditions impos'd*, as a juſt Ground of a *ſinleſs Departure*; but then, indeed, they deny to Individuals a Judgment of Diſcretion, to determine each for himſelf of the Sinfulneſs of the *Conditions*: Thus they take away with one Hand, what they gave with the Other. And in this (worthy Doctor) you, and your fiery Brethren, ſeem as ſtreight lac'd, as theſe *Romiſh Zealots*: For, tho' in the general, you will allow us, very freely, that ſinful Impoſitions are a juſt Plea for Separation;

Separation; yet, your fore-quoted Friend has plainly, and you implicitely, have render'd that Conceſſion of little Value, by a very fine Contrivance, tho' ſufficiently notorious. For, he all along tells us, that *private Wiſdom muſt ſubmit to the Public.* For, (ſays he) *Since the Peace of the Church often depends on ſuch Points, as Salvation does not, and ſince in many of thoſe, every Man is not a competent Judge, but muſt either be in Danger of being deceiv'd himſelf, or of troubling others, one muſt of Neceſſity truſt ſomebody elſe wiſer than himſelf.* So that the Matter, according to this *Hypotheſis*, is juſt as *long* as 'tis *broad*, with this Difference, that the Church of *Rome* utters that with open Mouth, which theſe Gentlemen deliver between their Teeth.

2. The other ſuppos'd Extream is, as he tells us, that of ſome Proteſtants, *who make the Cauſes of Separation as many, and as ſlight, as the* Jews *did of Divorce, almoſt for any Matter whatever; but as our Saviour, when the Caſe was put, found out a middle Way between Divorce for no Cauſe at all, and for every Cauſe, ſo ought it to be done in this Buſineſs of* Schiſm.

Reverend Doctor! we are now in a hopeful Way of compremiſing all the Controverſies, that have vext our *Northern* Climate, from the Beginning of the *Reformation* to this Day. For, as we may charitably hope, that all our *Epiſcopal Brethren* will ſtand to the Award of their own Writers, ſo I am confident, that I may engage for all the *Diſſenting Brethren*, that they will abide by the Umpirage of *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that whatever Expedient he made Uſe of, in deciding the grand Queſtion *about*

Divorce, ſhall conclude them in all their Debates *about Schiſm*: Now, the final Deciſion of that Affair, we find, *Mat.* 19. 8. where our Saviour conſiders not what cou'd plead *inveterate Cuſtom*, or, a *grey-headed Practice* to confirm its Pretenſions; he ſlights all the Arguments from *Laudable Examples*, and the *Traditions of their Fore-Fathers*, and runs up the Practice to its primitive Inſtitution, and tells them, *That from the Beginning it was not ſo.* And, indeed, if a Tranſcript be blotted, and obliterated, we preſently have Recourſe to the Original, to reſtore it: It was the Cry in the Council of *Nice*, Ἀρχαῖα τὰ ἔθη κρατείτω, and we cry the ſame, *One, and All*, Let the Terms of Communion in the firſt Plantation of the Goſpel-Church be produc'd, and he that will not ſubmit to thoſe *Archi-Types*, let him be branded for an Obſtinate Schiſmatic.

But now your Friend and Champion is coming to the Point, and lays down when we may with Juſtice ſeparate from any Congregation ------ *I ſay then* (ſays he) *and then only, is there juſt Cauſe of Separation, when Perſeverance in the Communion of ſuch a Church cannot be without Sin; that is, when ſhe ſhall impoſe ſuch Laws and Terms of Society, as cannot be ſubmitted to without apparent Breach of the Divine Law.* Thus, ſays the Advocate of Perſecution, and, if I ſhou'd tell you, that I ſay juſt the contrary, we ſhou'd, perhaps, make a Squabble of it. Let it be, therefore, neither what he ſays, nor I ſay; but what wiſer Men than both of us ſay, who may be preſum'd more impartial in their Judgments; wherein

wherein they vindicate the Diſſenters, becauſe they were, or are eminent Members of this Church. And firſt, I will preſent you, Reverend Doctor, with the Judgment of Mr. *Hales*, a Perſon, of whom the Church of *England* has great Cauſe to boaſt. Now among many other Things to our Purpoſe, in his Treatiſe of *Schiſm*, he acquaints us, 1. That *When either falſe, or uncertain Concluſions are obtruded for Truth; or Acts either unlawful, or miniſtring juſt Scruple, are requir'd of us to be perform'd. In theſe Caſes, Conſent wou'd be Conſpiracy; and open Conteſtation is not* Faction, *or* Schiſm, *but due Chriſtian Animoſity. 2. That nothing abſolves Men from the Guilt of Schiſm, but true and unpretended Conſcience*, ſuch a Conſcience, therefore, will abſolve from the Guilt of it. 3. *That where the Cauſe of SCHISM is neceſſary, there not he, that ſeparates, but he, that is the Cauſe of the Separation is the Schiſmatic. 4. That to require the Execution of ſome unlawful, or ſuſpected Act, is a juſt Cauſe of refuſing Communion. For not only in Reaſon, but in Religion too that Maxim admits of no Releaſe* ----- Cautiſſimi cujusq; preceptum quod dubitas ne feceris. 5. That *it has been a common Diſeaſe of Chriſtians, from the Beginning, not to content themſelves with that Meaſure of Faith, which God and the Scriptures have expreſly afforded; but out of a vain Deſire to know more, than is reveal'd, they have attempted to deviſe Things, of which we have no Light either from Reaſon, or Revelation. Neither have they reſted here, but upon Pretence of Church-Authority, (which is none) or Tradition, (which for the moſt Part is feign'd) they have*

peremptorily concluded, and confidently impos'd upon others a Neceſſity of entertaining Concluſions of that Nature. 6. To load our Public Forms with the private Fancies upon which we differ, is the moſt ſovereign Way to perpetuate Schiſm to the World's End. Prayer, Confeſſion, Thankſgiving, Reading of Scriptures, Adminiſtration of Sacraments in the plaineſt and ſimpleſt Manner, were Matter enough to furniſh out a ſufficient Liturgy, tho' nothing either of Private Opinion, or of Church Pomp, of Garments, or preſcrib'd Geſtures, of Imagery, of Muſic, of Matter concerning the Dead, of many Superfluities which creep into the Church under the Name of Order and Decency, did interpoſe itſelf. To charge Churches, and Liturgies, with Things unneceſſary, was the firſt Beginning of all Superſtition. 7. That no Occaſion has produc'd more frequent, more continuous, more ſanguineous Schiſms, than Epiſcopal Ambition has done. 8. That they do but abuſe themſelves, and others, that wou'd perſuade us, that Biſhops, by Chriſt's Inſtitution, have any Superiority over other Men, farther than that of Reverence, or that any Biſhop is ſuperior to another, further than poſitive Order agreed upon among Chriſtians has preſcrib'd. 9. In Times of manifeſt Corruptions, or Perſecutions, wherein Religious Aſſembling is dangerous, Private Meetings, howſoever beſides Public Order, are not only lawful, but they are of Neceſſity and Duty. All Pious Aſſemblies in Times of Perſecution and Corruption, however practis'd, are indeed, or rather alone, the Lawful Congregations; and Public Aſſemblies, tho' according to Form of Law, are, indeed, nothing elſe but Riots, and Conventicles, if they be ſtain'd with Corruption, and Superſtition.

There

There is another Perſon, whom you cannot but approve, whom I will preſume to recommend to your Conſideration, *Irenic.* p. 109. where ſpeaking of the private Chriſtian, he ſays, *He is bound to adhere to that Church, which appears moſt to retain the Evangelical Purity.* And *p.* 116. *He is bound to break off from that Society, which enjoins a Mixture of ſome Corruptions, as to Practice.* One Word from Dr. *Jackſon*, cap. 14. of the *Church*, where he acquits thoſe of *Schiſm*, who withdraw from that Church, which impoſes Rites and Cuſtoms, that croſs the Rule of Faith and Charity. Biſhop *Bramhall*'s Teſtimony will paſs for Sterling, *p.* 7, 8. of *Schiſm.* *When there is a mutual Diviſion of two Parts, or Members of the Myſtical Body of Chriſt one from the other, yet both retaining Communion with the Univerſal Church*; Quamcunq; partem amplexus fueris, Schiſmaticus non audies, quippe quod Univerſa Eccleſia neutram damnavit; *Which Side ſoever you cloſe with, you ſhall not be reproached for a Schiſmatic, becauſe the Univerſal Church has condemn'd neither Side.* And he plainly tells us, *p.* 101. *That it was not the erroneous Opinions of the Church of* Rome, *but the Obtruding them by Laws upon other Churches, that warranted a Separation.*

Give me Leave next to recommend, in a particular manner, to you, Sir, a Word from the Learned Lord *Verulam*, *'Tis a Sign* (ſays he) *of Exaſperation to condemn the contrary Part as a Sect; you, and ſome indiſcreet Perſons have been bold in open Preaching, to uſe diſhonourable and reproaching Speeches, and Cenſures*

ſures of the Churches abroad, and that ſo far, as that ſome of our Men (as I have heard) ordain'd in Foreign Parts have been pronounced no Lawful Miniſters. ----- And further, ---- *Let us remember, that the Ancient and True Bounds of Unity are,* ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM; *and not* One Ceremony, *and* One Policy; *and endeavour to comprehend that Saying,* Differentia Rituum commendat Unitatem Doctrinæ; *Chriſt's Coat was, indeed, without Seam, yet the Churches Garment was of divers Colours.*

Among all theſe Worthies, we muſt by no Means forget the Lord *Falkland, A little Search will find them* (he ſpeaks of no little Ones) *to have been the Deſtruction of Unity, under Pretence of Uniformity; to have brought in Superſtition and Scandal under Titles of Reverence and Decency; to have ſlacken'd the Strictneſs of Unity, which was between us, and thoſe of our Religion beyond Seas.*

Socrates Lib. 5. Cap. 21. tells us, *That in his Time there cou'd ſcarcely be found two Churches, that us'd the ſame Forms of Prayer.* In *France,* the Ritual of *Paris* differ'd from that of *Anjou*; and in *England* we had our Devotions *ſecundum Uſum* Sarum, *& ſecundum Uſum* Bangor; and yet the One never reproach'd the Other for *Sectariſts* and *Schiſmatics.* I am, therefore, confident to aſſert it, that neither the Wit nor Malice of Man can prove him a *Schiſmatic,* who maintaining *Evangelical Love* towards, and holding the ſubſtantial Doctrines own'd by the Church of *England,* ſhall either out of Choice, or Neceſſity tranſplant himſelf from under the ſpreading Shadow of the

the Cathedral to a Parochial Church; and yet the One has its Organs, Adoration towards the Eaſt, and Altar, and many other Rites and Obſervances, unknown to the Villages, and far more differing from the Parochial Uſages, and Cuſtoms, than the Worſhip of moſt Country Towns differs from that of the *Diſſenters*.

But I will throw up the Advantage of all theſe Authorities, and yet leave it to the Abilities of you, Reverend Doctor, or any of your Kidney, to prove the former Propoſition, when I have firſt noted ſome few Things. 1. By the ſaid Propoſition is requir'd an *Apparent Breach of the Divine Law*, as the only Thing, that can excuſe *Separation* from the Guilt of *Schiſm*. But will not a *Real Breach of the Divine Law* do as well, unleſs it be ſo apparent as you can deſire? I am perſuaded, that God never yet ſpoke ſo loud, as to be heard by him who had ſeal'd up his Ears; or wrote ſo plain, as that he ſhould ſee his Mind, whoſe Eyes were blinded by Intereſt or Paſſion. But what if it be an *Apparent Breach of the Divine Law* in the ſincere Judgment of *him that ſeparates*, muſt he never diſcharge his Duty, 'till he can perſuade all the World to ſee theirs, and purſue it. At that rate, I am afraid, the Separation from the *Romiſh* Church will hardly be ſufficiently juſtify'd.

Who ſhall be Judge, Whether the impoſed Terms contain an *Apparent Breach of the Divine Law*, aud ſuch as will juſtify a *Separation?* Mr. *Hales*, indeed, tells us, ---- *It is a Point of no great Depth, or Difficulty*; but yet

yet *the true Solution of it carries Fire in the Tail of it; for it brings with it a Piece of Doctrine, which is ſeldom pleaſing to Superiours.* But did not Men hate *chargeable Truth* more than *cheap Error*, and love *cheap Corruptions* more than *coſtly Reformation*, there cou'd be no great Difficulty who ſhou'd be Judge in this Caſe. For, 1. Who may more juſtly challenge a Liberty to judge *what Sin is*, than he, that muſt be *damn'd if he do Sin?* He, that ſins at another's Command, will hardly perſuade him to be his Subſtitute in his Condemnation; nor will God accept him for the Sinner's Proxy. 2. If the Church muſt judge, then tho' her Terms be *the moſt apparent Violations of the Divine Law*, yet there can never be any lawful Separation, unleſs we can imagine her ſo modeſt as to confeſs a Sin, and yet at the ſame time, ſo immodeſt as to impoſe it. To acknowledge her Terms ſinful, and yet, at the ſame time, to enjoin them as neceſſary to Communion.

It will be pretended, that the ſame Inconveniences will follow the *other Way*. For, if a particular Perſon, who withdraws muſt judge, then let the Terms be *perfectly innocent*, yet to be ſure, he will plead, that they are ſinful, unleſs we can ſuppoſe him ſo modeſt, as to confeſs himſelf a *Schiſmatic*, and yet at the ſame Time ſo *immodeſt*, as to perſevere in his *Schiſm*. But I conceive, that this Arguing is very wide. 1. Becauſe every Man's Soul lies at Stake, and it cannot be imagin'd, that he ſhould either not ſtudy its Intereſt, or that underſtanding it, he ſhould not endeavour to ſecure it. I ſpeak of ſuch,

as

as are *otherwiſe Conſcientious*. For if he be a Perſon vicious and profligate, one eaten up with Wickedneſs, we ought not to flatter our ſelves with any great Hopes of the Impartiality of his Determinations; and if he has thus debauch'd his Conſcience, the Laws are open, the Magiſtrate, who has his Power from the *Moral Law*, has, by the ſame Law, ſufficient Authority to coerce by Puniſhments whatever Enormities are committed againſt it. 2. We have no Reaſon to ſuppoſe any Man to be an Hypocrite in the Matter of *Separation*, which is attended with ſo many dreadful Penalties, unleſs notorious Evidence will warrant ſuch a Judgment.

A Rational Suſpicion of a Breach of the Divine Law is enough in the Apoſtle's Judgment to juſtify the Suſpenſion of my own Act; and if it prove only a Thing indifferent in itſelf, yet ſuch Diſſatisfaction will excuſe from Sin. For ſo the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 14. 5. *Let every Man be fully perſuaded in his own Mind.* 14. *To him that eſteemeth any Thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* 23. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of Faith; for whatever is not of Faith is Sin.*

Your Friends, and You (Worthy Doctor) ſeem to ſtand all this while between the Two Extreams of *All-Separation* and *No-Separation*. Let us, therefore, ſee, how you, and your Partizans will behave your ſelves againſt them both. To the *Romaniſts* you will ſay, ---- It is plain, that it can be no Sin to ſeparate, when it is a Sin to communicate. We grant it is plain, but then allow the Diſſenters to uſe the ſame Argument againſt you. But

then I am ſenſible you will reply, It was an apparent Breach of the Divine Law, upon which we ſeparated from *Rome*. In the ſame manner the *Diſſenters* ſay, It is an apparent Breach of the Divine Law, upon which we ſeparated from the *Church of England*. But then I fear you will rejoin, that we ought *to have truſted wiſer Men than our ſelves*. But then comes in the *Romaniſts*, with a ------- *You ought to have truſted wiſer Men than your ſelves*, your Superiours in the Church, from whom you ſeparated. No, reply you, But we have a *Judgment of Diſcretion*, and ought to be Maſters of our own Reaſon ſo far, *as to take Cognizance of our own Acts*. Well, 'tis allow'd by the *Diſſenters*, but then allow what you demand; We likewiſe have a *Judgment of Diſcretion*, and ought to be Maſters of our own Reaſon ſo far, *as to take Cognizance of our own Acts*. Nothing can be return'd, that I can ſee, but that it is not for ſuch pityful Underlings, as the *Diſſenters*, to talk of *Conſcience*, and a *Judgment of Diſcretion*; it is enough for ſuch mighty Men of the Church only, to make Uſe of the Argument againſt *Rome*.

Thus you quickly rid your Hands of the *Romaniſts*; but the Diſſenters Objections not being ſo eaſily remov'd, you pretend to ſilence them with a dreadful Threat.

It is plain (ſays one of you) *that Schiſm being ſo great a Sin, and of ſo extream bad Conſequences, that which muſt acquit me of the Guilt of it in my Separation, can be nothing leſs, than an equal Danger on the other Hand, and that when I may perſevere without Sin, it muſt be a*

Sin

Sin to ſeparate upon inferiour Diſlikes. This, indeed, has a ſpecious Countenance on the firſt Appearance, if it were not for a few Inconveniences in the Argument. 1. That here is the whole Queſtion begg'd at once. The Queſtion is, ---- *Whether the Impoſitions of ſuch Laws, and Terms of Society, as cannot be ſubmitted to without apparent Breach of the Divine Laws, be the only juſt Cauſe of Separation?* What your Friends have ſaid, and what from them we have urg'd, are in the Affirmative, and for Proof give us this. ---- *That Schiſm being ſo great a Sin, that which muſt acquit us of the Guilt of it in our Separation, muſt be equal Danger of Sinning, that is, of an apparent Breach of the Divine Law*; which is the Queſtion itſelf a little diſguis'd to make it more paſſable on the unwary Reader. The Truth is, --- Schiſm is ſo great a Sin, that no Danger of Sinning whatſoever can acquit one of it; for I do not know, that any thing will compound for *Uncharitableneſs*, for *Pride*, for *Obſtinacy*; but *Separation* for the Benefit of all God's Ordinances, that he may be edify'd, and built up in the moſt Holy Faith, has nothing of the Nature of abominable Sin in it. 2. *Diſſenters* will anſwer, that the *Danger of Sinning* is more clear, and evident, when *I act againſt my Conſcience*, than in Separating *peaceably* and *modeſtly* from a *particular Church*. There is leſs Danger of Sin in breaking a human Conſtitution, which is (at leaſt) queſtionable, whether a Man has Power to enjoin, than violating my own Reaſon inform'd by all the Means, I can uſe from the Word of God. 3. The *Diſſenters* ſay, that they ought not to ſeparate,

but when *Non-Separation* is ſinful: But then they ſay likewiſe, that *Non-Separation* may be ſinful upon other Accounts, than the apparent Breach of the *Divine Law*, made the Terms of entring into, or continuing in Communion. For ſay they, It is our Sin, if a Church retains ſome Corruptions in it, which *prejudice Edification*; and ſhe ſhall reſolve never to make any Alteration in her Worſhip and Diſcipline, nor make any Progreſs towards a thorough Reformation in the Scruples which ſhe adminiſters to tender Conſciences, not to provide for my ſelf elſewhere, and having Opportunity, I ſin if I take not the Advantage, which Providence offers me, and in which the Word of God himſelf does warrant me.

And yet ye wonder, that any Doubt can be admitted in this Caſe. But what is the Cauſe of this Admiration? Why ſome (ſay you) think to waſh themſelves from the Imputation of Schiſm upon other Terms, as, namely, ----- *If a Church will not require ſuch Terms as are expreſly ſinful, yet if ſhe ſhall require indifferent, unneceſſary, or at moſt ſuſpected Things, that in this Caſe there is enough to excuſe the Perſon, that ſhall ſeparate from a Participation of that Sin.* There are ſome, no doubt, of that Judgment, and when I have premis'd ſome few Things, I will leave them entirely at your Mercy.

Firſt, then, They join Iſſue upon this Point, 'tis not becauſe they are ſatisfy'd, that the Things requir'd unto Communion, as the antecedent Conditions of it, or to be practic'd in Communion, as the *Matter* of it, are indifferent in *their Uſe and Application*; for they

they are ready to maintain them upon equal Laws, before equal Judges, that they are ſinful in their Uſe antecedent to their Propoſition; but the true Reaſons why they uſe this Place, are, 1. *Ex abundanti*, thinking that their very Outworks are impregnable againſt your Batteries. 2. Out of Reſpect to this Church, which they highly honour, and reverence her too much to charge her flatly with ſinful Impoſitions; and, therefore, offer this State of the Queſtion, and are hardly capable of ſo much Incivility to ſo conſiderable a Body, and ſo great a Part of the Viſible Catholic Church, did not the Importunity of ſome Men of your conſpicuous Modeſty extort that Anſwer from them. 3. They doubt, whether ſome Church-Men will be Maſters of ſo much Patience, as to bear Freedom, the *Temperateneſs* of Speech, which is abſolutely neceſſary to the Managing of the Controverſy when thus ſtated; and have Reaſon to fear, that ſome, who provoke them to aſſert the *Sinfulneſs of the Terms*, will make ſuch an Aſſertion an unpardonable Sin, not to be expiated without, if with Martyrdom.

When your Friends ſtate the Queſtion about the Things *ſuſpected to be ſinful*, we humbly hope, that you will give us Leave to draw our own Plea, in our own Terms, and to explain what we mean by the *ſuſpected Things* in Queſtion, becauſe we lye under no Obligation to maintain every Propoſition, which you, in your well-known Charity, ſhall obtrude upon us. We may, therefore, ſuſpect a Practice of *Sinfulneſs* two Ways. 1. Upon *light, ſlight, and trivial Grounds of Suſpicion*, which

which have no Weight with a ſerious, and rational Conſiderer. Or, 2. Upon *violent Preſumptions*, ſuch as may ſtagger a Perſon of good Judgment and Diligence. And theſe are what we are willing to argue it with you, Whether if a Church ſhall impoſe ſuch Things as the Terms of Communion with her, as have, or do, or may puzzle judicious Perſons as to their Lawfulneſs, and cannot clear it up to their Conſciences, that they are *lawful*, yet they muſt not forbear Communion in this Caſe.

We deſire the ſame Juſtice, in explaining our ſelves about the Term *Indifferent*. *A Thing may be indifferent in its own Nature, and not ſo in its Uſe*, as apply'd to, and practic'd in the immediate Worſhip and Service of God. If the Things under Debate, are upon diligent Search, found to remain indifferent after they are veſted with all their Circumſtances in God's Worſhip, we have no manner of Quarrel againſt you; but if they are only indifferent in their own *general Nature*, we deſire to be excus'd, if we dare not admit the Conſequence; that, therefore, they muſt needs be ſo when us'd in *God's Worſhip*, and then made the Terms of Communion.

Unneceſſary Things may be either ſuch as are *abſolutely* unneceſſary; or ſuch as are *Hypothetically* ſo: Some Things that are not *abſolutely*, and in themſelves neceſſary, yet may become neceſſary *pro hic & nunc*, even antecedent to the Interpoſition of the Church's Authority; and the *Diſſenters* ſay, that whatever the Church ſhall impoſe ought to be neceſſary, either in *itſelf*, or by *concurrent Circumſtances*, which when they ſhall conſpire together, may

be

be by a lawful Authority enjoin'd *pro Tempore*, that is, ſo long as ſuch Neceſſity ſhall continue; but when that is remov'd, the Things ought to return into *their former Claſs of Indifferents.*

When the *Diſſenters* deny the Churches Power of impoſing Things *expreſly ſinful*, they deny alſo a Power of impoſing Things *ſinful by juſt Conſequence.* They judge many Things ſinful, which are not forbidden κατὰ τὸ ῥητὸν in the Scriptures, and many Things Duties, which are not litterally and ſyllabically commanded in the Scriptures. They ſay not, that the Sign of the Croſs was ever by Name prohibited; but they ſay, that there are undoubted Maxims laid down in the Word, from which it will undeniably follow, that in its preſent Station in the Church it is ſinful. Having premis'd theſe Conſiderations, we may now venture to hear three things, which if they were pertinent, and prov'd as ſtrongly, as they are ſpoken confidently by your Party, I ſhou'd reſt entirely ſatisfy'd. The *firſt* conſiſts of a Conceſſion, and an Aſſertion. The Conceſſion is (to uſe the Words of an Author of yours) *I willingly acknowledge, that ſuch a Church, as ſhall ſtudiouſly, or careleſſly clogg her Communion with unneceſſary, burthenſome, and ſuſpected Conditions, is very highly to blame*, that is, *ſhe ſins*, but that it became not him to tell her ſo; and then will I venture to ſay a few Words alſo. ----- 1. If it be the Churches Sin to command *unneceſſary, burthenſome, ſuſpected Conditions*, it cannot be my Duty to obey. A Church may poſſibly *ſin* in the *Matter of her Command*, and yet I not

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ſin in doing the *Matter* of the Command: But when the *Sin* is in the enjoyning, I can by no Means conceive how it ſhou'd be *my Sin* not to give Obedience. For, I look upon my *Duty* as the Reſult of the Churches *Authority*, but in thoſe Things, in which ſhe has no *Authority*, it will be impoſſible to find a Foundation upon which to build my *Duty*. All Offices of Juſtice ariſe from that Relation, in which he that *claims*, and he that *yields* Subjection ſtand to each other; but where there is no *Relation*, there can be no *relative Duty*. Now in this Caſe before us, where the Church has no *Power* to command, nay, where ſhe *ſins* if ſhe *commands*, ſo far ſhe is none of my *Superiour*, and therefore, ſo far there is no *Relation*, and by Conſequence the Duty no more. 2. If the Church *be to blame* highly, (nay, as your Friend ſays) *very highly* to blame, that cloggs her Communion with theſe burthenſome Things, then we may preſume ſhe *ſins*; for, who ſhall dare to aſſume ſo much Freedom as to blame her, unleſs ſhe *tranſgreſs the Law of her God*. If then ſhe here ſinn'd and tranſgreſs'd ſome Law of God, it muſt be ſome negative Precept, --- *Thou ſhalt not impoſe burthenſome* Things; for it ſeems a Principle that your Partizans ſeem unwilling to part with on any Terms whatſoever, *That whatſoever is not forbidden is lawful*. If then God had not forbidden her to impoſe ſuch burthenſome Things, ſhe cou'd not ſin, or be to blame in ſo doing (according to your Principles) now ſay I, ------ The ſame God that has prohibited the Churches Impoſition of, has alſo prohibited my *Subjection to bur-*

burthenſome Conditions; and if you, Gentlemen, will produce your Scriptures for the one I will equal your Number for the other, whenever you pleaſe. Thus we are commanded, 1 *Cor.* 7. 23. *Not to be the Servants of Men*, not *only bought with a Price*, and ſet free once, but commanded to aſſert that Freedom; and *Gal.* 5. 1. *To ſtand faſt in that Liberty, wherewith Chriſt has made us free, and not again to be entangled with the Yoak of Bondage.* Now if ever theſe Scriptures do us any Service, or be of any Uſe, it muſt be in this particular, that I am oblig'd not to take a Burden upon my Soul at his Hands, who has no Authority to impoſe it. If then a Church ſhall clogg her Communion with burthenſome Things, ſhe is to blame, ſhe ſins, and I am not bound to obey; and therefore, my Departure can be no *Schiſm*, I mean, no Schiſm, but one of *Man's Creating*. 3. If a Church ſin in clogging her Communion with Things, which without Crime or Fraud, are *ſuſpected of Sin*, upon ſuch Grounds as are allow'd juſt, and ponderous in other Caſes, then can it not be my Sin to ſeparate. For the Church ſins in Commanding, and I ſhould ſin againſt the Authority of God in my Conſcience in doing what I really upon *ſtrong Preſumptions*, judge to be ſinful, tho' it were not commanded. And now one wou'd imagine that it were no ſuch meritorious Work, no Act ſo acceptable to God to perſevere in the Communion of a Church, when ſhe ſins in commanding, and I ſin in obeying ev'n *ſuſpected Conditions*.

Having done with the *Conceſſion*, we now come to the *Aſſertion*, by which we ſhall find, that all, that the *Conceſſion* has giv'n us is at once taken from us again, if it were poſſible, and we ſhall gain nothing by any thing you are pleas'd to give us. There are likewiſe two Parts of the *Aſſertion*,

1. The Negative Part, ----- *'Tis not Burthensomness, nor every light Suspicion of Sin, that can justify any Separation.* Concerning *Burthensomness*, we have spoken somewhat already, yet a Word or two may be added about the *Suspicion.* --- *'Tis not a light*, or however, *not every light Suspicion*, that is but like the *Dust of the Balance*, that will do it. Your Champion, Doctor, expects perhaps, that we shou'd assert, that *every light Suspicion*, that weighs no more than a Feather, should be enough to justify a *Separation.* But there are violent Presumptions, which they say, in some Cases are admitted as good Evidence. If I meet with a Person coming out of a House, in a great Rage, with a bloody Sword in his Hand, and I immediately enter, and find a Person lying in Blood, I do assure you, that I can by no Means condemn my self of *Lightness of Belief*, or *Easiness of entertaining Suspicions* if I suspect the Man I met to be the Murderer; light Suspicions may be as easily shaken off as fasten'd on, but it becomes no wise Man to act against these *strong Presumptions* of Sin, which the *Dissenters* have of the impos'd Terms of Communion; and it will appear, that they are such as may make a hardy, resolute Person stand, and pause before he rushes upon the Practice.

1. They are sure that *Christ* is the perfect, and therefore, the only Law-giver of his Church. Had he not been the *former*, there had been no Pretence, that he shou'd be the *latter.* Now seeing that these Terms of Communion, are Laws impos'd on the Church, they seem to impeach his Wisdom, as not seeing the fittest Terms for his Church to hold Communion upon; they seem to reproach his Care, that he has not left Laws enow for his Church; and they seem to invade his Authority without any Warrant; all which Things are sufficient to raise a Suspi-

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cion (at leaſt) of good Strength in a wiſe Man's Breaſt, which none but a raſh and hardy Spirit wou'd act againſt.

2. They are ſure, that ſome of theſe Conditions have been occaſion'd by, and us'd in, and with, and are ſuited, and accommodated to the *groſſeſt Idolatry* that ever was in the World, and is at this Day us'd to give Countenance to it. And they ſay, they are ſure, that God did once hate *Idolatry*, and ſo hate it, as that he could not endure to be ſerv'd in the Veſſels, worſhipp'd in the Places, nor after the Manner (in the moſt minute Circumſtances) that *Idolatry* was committed in. And, therefore, we have Reaſon to ſuſpect, that the Things requir'd of us are diſpleaſing to God; our Uſing of them has emboldened Idolaters, and harden'd them to go on without Repentance in the Way of ſo great an Abomination. Nor have they been a Bridge, as was hop'd, to bring them over to us, but a Brook to waft us over to them, they being more harden'd by our retaining them, and ſome of our own made more wavering, thinking, that there can be no great Difference between thoſe Religions, where there is ſo great a Symbolizing in outward Modes and Ceremonies.

3. They are ſure, That all *uncommanded Worſhip* is *forbidden Worſhip*, and do think their Time ill beſtow'd with him, that ſhall deny it. All Worſhip being Part of that Homage, and Service we owe to God, it will be impoſſible to gheſs what he will accept as ſuch, without Revelation. Now we are ſure, Reverend Doctor, that both you and your Champion own the Liturgy to have been a *principal Part of Worſhip*, and we are as ſure, that the Ceremonies are *Part of the Liturgy*, and that which is a Part of a Part is *Part of the Whole*, nor can any Man diſ-

cern any Difference between them, and other Things, which are confeſſedly Parts of Worſhip; and therefore they think, that they may with Modeſty ſay ---- *There is* Ground enough for a violent Suſpicion of their Sinfulneſs.

The Affirmative Part of this Aſſertion follows ---- *It muſt be plain Neceſſity, or Certainty of Sin in Compliance, that can juſtify any Separation*, ſays the Author I before hinted at, and with him, Doctor, you all agree; but I ſhou'd be very glad to know what *Certainty of Sin* you will allow to juſtify a Separation? Do you expect a Mathematical Certainty? or only a moral Aſſurance? If you ask an Arithmetician (ſays *Juſt. Martyr* in his Dialogue with *Trypho*) how many twice two will make, he will anſwer you as often ---- *four*. And if I were ask'd a Thouſand Times what *Certainty* of Sin were requir'd to the *Suſpenſion of my own Act*, I wou'd as often anſwer no more of Neceſſity, than that the Thing does not *appear* to my beſt and impartial Judgment to be *lawful*. Separation is not *neceſſarily* a *Sin*; there are as pregnant Commands for it, as Prohibitions of it: It may be a *Duty*, and it may be a *Sin*, and why need we not as *plain* Argument to prove that Separation is *not my Duty*, as that it is not *my Sin?* ſince it may be one, as well as the other? But I find, you Gentlemen are not without your Reaſons here, ſuch at leaſt, as the Cauſe will furniſh.

Forasmuch (will you ſay) *as I cannot be diſcharg'd from a plain Duty, but by an equal Plainneſs of Sin.* This Reaſon, indeed, at firſt Sight has a pretty Sort of an Aſpect enough, yet in Reality it demonſtrates no more, than that he who offers it bears a very good Will to the Cauſe. For, 1. It is no more than a plain Begging the Queſtion, *viz.* That *Compliance is a plain Duty*; Schiſm indeed

deed is a plain Sin, but Separation is not *plainly* Schiſm. It is a plain Contradiction to the Aſſertion, but not a plain Confutation of it, unleſs the Denyal of it in other Words be to be call'd a Confutation. The Buſineſs in ſhort is this; I ſuſpect ſuch *Compliance not to be my Duty*; and again, ---- I ſuſpect the *Terms of Communion to be ſinful*; and ſurely we may ſet ſuſpected Sin as a Bar to what is but ſuſpected Duty. Let us but a little compare Things, that which you call plain Duty, is Compliance with ſuch a Church as impoſes Things *unneceſſary*, *burthenſom*, and *ſuſpicious*; that which you call *plain Sin*, is the refuſing ſuch Compliance. Now this, ſay I, is a plain begging of the Queſtion, which is all the Plainneſs in this offer'd Reaſon. *Firſt*, To enquire whether ſuch a Separation, or Non-Compliance be lawful, and then to ſuppoſe ſuch Compliance to be *plain Duty*, and then to aſſign this for the Reaſon, that nothing but equal Plainneſs of Sin can diſcharge me from a plain Duty. The Diſſenters do affirm, that it is as plain, nay more plain, and if you will have it, Doctor, ſo *much more plain* a Sin to practiſe the Ceremonies, than to ſeparate: For Separation may be a Duty in ſome Caſes, but the Practiſing ſuch Ceremonies cannot be a Duty in *any Caſe* on this Side Divine Preſcription. God has warranted *Separation* in general, but he has not in the ſame Manner warranted Ceremonies.

A ſecond Reaſon added to this by ſome of your Friends is this ----- *And as for this Phraſe* [ſuſpected] *it is ſo looſe and uncertain, that there's no Hold of it, Men will eaſily ſuſpect what they have no Mind to.* Whether this Word [*ſuſpected*] be a Phraſe or not, I ſhall leave to the wrangling *Grammarians*; only I am affraid, that in a while every ſmall *Particle* will be a Phraſe, when theſe Gentlemens Occaſions ſhall require it. A *ſuſpect-*

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ted Evil is no such trivial Thing in the Apostles Divinity, as these Gentlemen wou'd perswade us. To act in any Case, when we have not a clear Light into the Lawfulness of the Action, is Sin, and such an One as renders the Actor obnoxious to eternal Damnation. *He that doubts is damned if he eat.* And indeed, to act against the Restraint of our own Judgment, *tho' mistaken*, argues a Mind prepar'd to act against our Judgments, *if they had* not *been mistaken.* He, that shall attempt to clip the Queen's Coin, may meet with a *plated Piece*, yet had it been right Standard, he wou'd have serv'd it no better. *That Men will easily suspect what they have no Mind to*, ought not to prejudice those, who have no Mind to a Thing because they suspect it to be evil. 'Tis as easy for another to say, that what Men have a desperate Love to, they will by no Means be brought to suspect the Sinfulness of. What wise Man wou'd suspect 400 or 500 *l. per Annum* to be unlawful? Our Inclinations naturally warp towards Ease and Rest; and they who know no God but their mistaken selves, will own no Scripture but what is dictated from the Inspiration of fleshly Interest. The Byas of Nature draws us more to *suspect* the Lawfulness of that, which being unlawful wou'd undo us, than to suspect that to be *unlawful*, which being *lawful* wou'd advance us.

And this might justify all sober Dissenters, that they, who condemn them are confess'd to be to blame, in clogging their Communion with unnecessary, burthensom and suspected Conditions; and they, who are condemn'd for suspecting it to be as sinful in them to obey, as it is in others to command, and thereupon suspending their Complyance, are either violently cast out of, or not admitted into Communion, and this is your *Monstrous Schismatic*. And

And I am very confident, that not only the Scriptures, but all Antiquity, with the unanimous Suffrage of the Reform'd Churches, will juſtify, and acquit that Perſon of the Guilt of *Schiſm*, who being ſound in the Faith, holy in his Life, earneſtly pleading and petitioning for Reformation; humbly deſiring that he may have Chriſt's Ordinances upon Chriſt's Terms, and yet being deny'd his Right, ſhall make his Applications to ſome other particular Church of Chriſt, where his Admittance may be more eaſy, his Continuance more certain, and ſafe, his Mind not diſtracted with Suſpicions about his own Actings, but his whole Strength and Spirits expended in the Edification of his own Soul in Truth, Holineſs, and Peace, which before were waſted in doubtful Diſputations.

The ſecond Thing you will ſay, is ---- *If the Non-Neceſſity of ſome of the Terms of Communion, be a Warrant for Separation, then there can be no ſuch Thing as Schiſm at all.* I make no Manner of Queſtion, that thoſe, who urge this Argument, intend that it ſhall proceed *a Remotione Conſequentis, ad Remotionem Antecedentis.* But there is ſuch *a Sin as Schiſm*, therefore the Non-Neceſſity of ſome of the Terms of Communion is not a Warrant of Separation. There are many Things, that I wou'd anſwer to this Argument. 1. That the whole Syllogiſm is troubled with the Old Malady call'd *Igonoratio Elenchi*, ſince we find but juſt in the precedent Arguments the particular Author of this undertook to prove, *That the Churches requiring indifferent, unneceſſary, or at moſt, ſuſpected Things, wou'd not excuſe the Perſon, that ſhould ſeparate, from the Guilt of Schiſm.* Afterwards we find *burthenſom* put into the Argument. And now you are content with this frail Concluſion, that *the Non-*

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Neceſſity of ſome of the Terms is no ſufficient Warrant of Separation, which is an Argument, ſome call an Ignorance of the Queſtion; but I call it a fighting with his meer Shadow. What if bare Non-Neceſſity alone, without Burthenſomneſs; or, what if both theſe without ſtrong Suſpicion of Sin, will not warrant it, yet if all theſe put together will do it, the *Diſſenters* will eſcape the Imputation of *Schiſm* and *Schiſmatics*. 2. I deny the Conſequence. There might be, there wou'd be *Schiſm*, too much *Schiſm*; tho' I confeſs, not half ſo much as there is, tho' the Non-Neceſſity were a good Warrant of Separation. If Schiſm indeed lay in nothing but in running away from a Church (as the vulgar Error carries it) you had come a little nearer to the Mark. But, if we durſt content ourſelves with the Scripture-Notion of Schiſm, which includes theſe Feuds, Heats, inteſtine Broils, theſe Envyings, Malignities, with which factious, and bandying Parties in the Boſom of the Church do perſecute one another, there might be as much *Schiſm*, as almoſt the Devil could deſire, and yet no *Separation*. But let us hear the Proof that is brought of the Conſequence. — *Forasmuch* (ſay they) *as there never was, or probably ever will be ſuch a Church, that requir'd nothing of thoſe in her Communiou, but Things ſtrictly, and abſolutely neceſſary. Ergo* What? *Why therefore, if the Non-Neceſſity of ſome of the Terms of Communion be a ſufficient Warrant of Separation, there can be no ſuch Thing as Schiſm.* Pray forbear; there is, as I take it, a Medium between Non-Neceſſity, and *ſtrictly*, and *abſolutely* neceſſary. I mean thoſe things, which being neither *neceſſary in their own Nature*, nor made ſo by any poſitive Law of God in particular; yet by a Concurrence of weighty Circumſtances, ſerving under ſome general Command of God, do become at that Time, and under thoſe Circumſtances neceſſary; and theſe are thoſe things wherein many Churches, I ſuppoſe, all Churches have at one Time or other exercis'd their Power; now then, it is Time, that if the non-abſolute Neceſſity of the Terms of Communion be a Warrant of *Separation*, there wou'd be no ſuch thing as *Schiſm at all*, by unwarrantable Separation from a Church, becauſe perhaps there never was a Church, that requir'd nothing of thoſe in her Communion, but things abſolutely neceſſary; yet it may be true, that the Non-Neceſſity of the Terms of Communion, may be a good Warrant for Separation; and yet there may be Schiſm enough in the World. For captious froward Spirits will be cavilling at, and dividing, upon Account of thoſe Things, which by a particular Church are requir'd, *becoming neceſſary*

ceſſary for Circumſtances. But to inform you aright in this Matter. The *Non-Conformiſts* do affirm, that whatever is made a Condition of Communion ought to have *ſome Kind of Neceſſity* in it, and with it, antecedent to its Impoſition; and being made ſuch a Condition, inſiſted upon; and ſome have attempted to prove what we are not at all concern'd to deny —— *That there never was, nor ever will be any ſuch Church that requir'd nothing of thoſe in her Communion, but Things abſolutely neceſſary.* To prove this you bid us *name one Church if we can, that has admitted of no other Opinion, or Rites, but ſuch as have been abſolutely neceſſary.* Hold! you ſhould prove, that *There never was any Church in any Age in any Country, but had* impos'd *Things not abſolutely neceſſary*; and you attempt only to prove, that there never was any Church but that *admitted* ſuch Things. But is there no critical Difference between admitting in the Uſe and Practice ſome Things indifferent, in an indifferent way, and *impoſing*, and enjoining them as neceſſary Terms of Communion? I will, Doctor, make a fair Motion. Let this Church *admit* of the Uſe and Practice of ſome Things, not *abſolutely* neceſſary, yet neither in their Nature ſinful, nor for Multitude burthenſom, nor for Abuſe ſuſpected, nor in their inſtituted Uſe ſacramental, and yet not impoſe them as *neceſſary Conditions of Communion*, and if there be leſs *Uniformity*, there will be a thouſand times more *Unity*, and true inward Love, Evangelical Tenderneſs and Fraternal Forbearance to compenſate a little outward *Decorum*, which perhaps is very ſurprizing with Women and Children.

The Sophiſtry of this Way of Arguing, I doubt not, is obvious to the Reader. Since by this, your Party-Men wou'd make it out, that there's no Church, which *admits* not ſome Determinations, not ſtrictly and *abſolutely neceſſary*, and from thence wou'd diſingeniouſly infer, that there's no Church, but what *IMPOSES* ſuch not abſolutely neceſſary Determinations; and further, thence infer, that if unneceſſary Terms of Communion be a Warrant of Separation, there can be no Schiſm in the World at all; whereas there are ſuch Things, as being neither *unneceſſary*, nor yet *abſolutely neceſſary* may be fit Matter of Agreement in Chriſtian Societies, that they may be more ſteadily govern'd, more peaceably, and inoffenſively manag'd; the Ordinances more methodically and orderly adminiſtred, and the Spiritual and Eternal Welfare of Souls more effectually advanc'd.

The *Third* and laſt Thing you Gentlemen ſay is, —— *That ſome Things are neceſſary to the Conſtitution and Adminiſtration of a particular Church, that are not in themſelves ne-*

ceſſary abſolutely conſider'd. But what this is to the Purpoſe I can't ſee, the Thing to be prov'd is — *That Things indifferent, unneceſſary, &c.* impos'd *as Conditions of Communion are not enough to excuſe the Perſon that ſeparates from a Participation of the Sin of Schiſm.* This is the Order of the Argument. — If ſome Things are neceſſary to the Conſtitution of a Church, which are not abſolutely neceſſary in themſelves, then the Impoſition of unneceſſary Terms of Communion is no Excuſe for Separation. But the former is true, *Ergo*, ſo is the latter; or in ſhort, if ſome Things be neceſſary, then the Church may impoſe Things not *neceſſary*, which was the Thing to be prov'd.

I have, and others beſides me have told you, that many Things *not neceſſary in themſelves* may become neceſſary *pro hic & nunc*; but then they muſt be *thus qualify'd* before they can be fit Matter of a Church's Determination. 1. They muſt be neceſſary one way or other *antecedently* to the Church's Determination. 2. The Neceſſity muſt extend as far as the Determination: For if they become neceſſary to one particular Church, and not to another, it will not oblige the other Church to come under the Impoſition, unleſs they come alſo under the Neceſſity. 3. That when the Neceſſity *evidently ceaſes*, the Impoſition ought alſo to ceaſe; and the Members of the Church may claim it of Right to be releas'd of the Burden, and may reſume their former Liberty, which the preſent Neceſſity did reſtrain. 4. Churches are not to feign Neceſſities, and imaginary Exigencies, as an Engine of ambitious Spirits to try Concluſions upon Mens Conſciences, or practiſe upon their Tameneſs; and therefore the Neceſſity ought to be ſuch, as carries its own Evidence along with it.

There are many Things which the Divine Authority has determin'd as to its *Kind* and *Sort*, which yet are not ſo determin'd in the *Individuals*; now when a Church meets with any *of theſe*, ſhe muſt come to a Determination; for otherwiſe the Divine Commands cannot poſſibly be reduc'd into Act, nor our Duty exercis'd. Thus he has commanded his Churches to aſſemble together for public Worſhip; he has appointed them Ordinances, wherein to receive Mercy and Grace from him; and Officers to adminiſter the Ordinances in the Church: The Church, therefore, is oblig'd to do whatever is neceſſary to the doing of her Duty. Thus God having oblig'd them to worſhip, they muſt come to an Agreement about the Place, meerly becauſe it is impoſſible to meet no where, *but in ſome Place* But if the *Divine Will* has not determin'd *in Specie*, Man cannot under the moſt ſpecious Pre-

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tence of Decency, or Adorning the Worſhip inſtitute any Thing, becauſe it wants ſome Head of *Divine Command* to which to reduce it. Thus God having given no Command to any Church to worſhip him under ſenſible Forms and Signs of inviſible Grace, no Church has Power to inſtitute any ſuch, and worſhip God by them. For in this Caſe, Divine Wiſdom, Love, and Authority have demonſtrated themſelves, and ſettled enow to anſwer God's End and ours.

If Chriſt had ſaid — As often as you baptize beſides the Waſhing with Water, which I have commanded you, ſee that you make ſome Figure over the Face of the Perſon to be baptized. and had not determin'd the Figure, Hexagonial, Pentagonal, or the like, the Church muſt come to a Concluſion about ſome Figure, or the Duty cou'd never be perform'd.

But a general Command — *That all Things be done decently, and in Order* will never be ſufficient to introduce theſe Symbolical Ceremonies, becauſe the Command may be ſatisfy'd without them, or any of them. They are not *neceſſary* ſo much as by *Diſjunction*. Whatever is comprehended under a Divine Precept is a neceſſary Duty at leaſt by *Diſjunction*, antecedent to any Command of any Church; but theſe Ceremonies are not neceſſary in any Senſe antecedently to the Command of a Church, and therefore, are not comprehended under the general Precept of — *Let all Things be done decently and in Order*. And indeed if they were, the Sign of the *Croſs* wou'd be a neceſſary Duty not only in or at Baptiſm, but in the Lord's Supper, in every Prayer, in all Preaching, in Singing of Pſalms, and in every Religious Exerciſe, ſince that Precept enjoins *All Things to be done decently, and in Order*; and we may preſume, that our Saviour with his Diſciples and Apoſtles perform'd all Divine Service in the moſt decent, congruous, and moſt edifying Modes, and yet they never practis'd that, or any other Ceremony of that Sort, and therefore they are not comprehended under the Rule.

But let us hear one of your Champions, who is reſolv'd to give us two Inſtances of this Truth, that *Some Things are neceſſary to the Conſtitution, and Adminiſtration of a particular Church, that are not in themſelves neceſſary, abſolutely conſider'd*. If he had pleas'd he might have giv'n us two hundred, for we are perfectly unconcern'd in them all. 1. The firſt Inſtance *is the Abſtaining from Things ſtrangled, and Blood, was by the Council of* Jeruſalem *adjudg'd and declar'd neceſſary by the* Gentiles, *in Order to an Accommodation between them and the* Jews; *and yet I ſuppoſe* (ſays he) *ſcarce any Body thinks the Obſervation of that Abſtinence ſo enjoin'd neceſſary in itſelf.*

But let us a little examine this great Instance. It was adjudg'd, and declar'd necessary to be observ'd (*says he*) therefore (*say I*) it was enjoyn'd because first *necessary*, and not made necessary by the *Injunction:* The Thing was not unnecessary before the Synodal Letters, nor the Council at Liberty to have determin'd the contrary, unless an Accommodation between *Jew* and *Gentile* was a thing unnecessary. *Acts* 15. 28. It seem'd good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater Burthen, than those necessary things πλὴν τῶν ἐπαναγκες τουτων. Now Doctor, I wish you wou'd try your Skill, to conclude a Power to impose *Things unnecessary* from this Fact of theirs, who only impos'd *Things necessary*.

2. That Council had the *immediate Assistance of the Holy Ghost*, and might more safely adventure upon such an Imposition, than any Particular, or National *Church*; who, as they have no *Promise*, cannot in Faith expect any such extraordinary Direction. And we hope, that no Church will assume equal Power to impose, unless they cou'd produce equal Authority for their Power, in which the Consciences of *Christians* might securely acquiesce. It wou'd be a strange Language from a *SYNOD*, *It seem'd good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no other Burdens than these necessary Things*, that yet observe all Ceremonies of our Appointment.

3. The People might reasonably conform to that Decree, which had their own Antecedent Consent, and the more patiently bear the Burden that was impos'd on *them, without themselves*; for this Canon was not only sent to the Churches by the Order of the *Apostles, Elders, & Brethren*. But alas! The Case is otherwise with the poor Churches in Reference to Imposition, of late Ages, who know no more what Impositions shall be laid upon their Consciences, than the poor Horse is acquainted whither his Master intends to ride him.

4. This was a Decree not to *burthen* them, but to ease and relieve them; not to pinch the *Gentiles*, but to discharge them of those servile Loads, which some *Judaizing* Converts wou'd have impos'd on them. We read, *ver.* 1. *That certain came down from* Judea, *which taught the Brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcis'd after the Manner of* Moses, *ye cannot be sav'd.* And when *Paul* and *Barnabas* oppos'd this Tyranny, yet, such was their Zeal for their Old Ceremonies, that they reinforc'd their scatter'd Squadrons from —— *Certain of the Sect of the* Pharisees *who believ'd* (ver. 5.) *saying, That it was necessary to Circumcise them, and command them to keep the Law of* Moses. At last, it comes before the Council, and they determine against those

those *Judaizing* Bigots; that their blind Zeal should not be the Measure of what was *necessary*, or *unnecessary*; and yet not to exasperate them, left perhaps they might apostatize wholly from *Christ*, and relapse to *Moses* (as they were in a fair Way) they determine, *To lay no other Burthen upon them, but those* really *necessary Things*: In Opposition to those *Other*, which the *Jewish* Brethren *falsly* pleaded to be *necessary*. So that they eas'd the Burthen, which some wou'd *by Doctrine* have laid upon their Shoulders; and only charg'd them by their Determination with what was *really necessary*.

5. Let us consider the things impos'd, *v.* 29. Abstaining from Meats offer'd to Idols, and from Blood, and from things strangled, and from Fornication: Of which *Fornication* was unlawful in itself. By Blood, many Learned Men understand *Murther*, which Opinion, the Learned Dr. *Hammond* recites, and as I remember, approves. And as to the not eating *Things strangled*, it has contracted a very reverend and grave Countenance by its Antiquity, being number'd among the seven Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*; and lastly, as for Meats offer'd to *Idols*; under that *Notion* it was, and still is unlawful.

6. All this was for avoiding Scandal, the Morality of which Precept, had it been understood by the raw Novice Professors of the *Gentiles*, it had taught them to abstain from a greater Matter than Blood, or *Things strangled*, (supposing them indifferent) that they might give no Offence. And therefore, while this Canon was in Force, and the sharpest Edge set on it, I question not but that the *Gentile Christian* might have eaten the τὸ πνικτον privately, or in Company, where no Offence was taken. For what were the *Jews* concern'd, what I shou'd eat at home either of the μερίδες, Fragments, or Portions of the Sacrifices sent to me by the Heathen Relation; or of those Things, that were kill'd by Suffocation. For thus was the End of the Decree attain'd, the Apostles satisfy'd, and the *Jews* pleas'd, and the Christian Liberty asserted, and vindicated. But the Case is otherwise with us, for such is the Holiness of a Cross, that any Minister omitting it, in Compliance with a weak Conscience, shall be call'd by you Doctor, an Underminer of the Church, a Debaucher of his Office, and the like, as you us'd some Eminent Divines in your 5th of *November* Sermon, for the meer Tenderness of some Great Men of the Church to the well meaning Dissenters: Nor wou'd such Omission escape under a Suspension *ab Officio, & Beneficio*.

7. Here was no Penalty affix'd, by Way of Sanction to this Decree. The Apostles contented themselves with that Spiritual

Spiritual Power, with which the Lord Christ had arm'd them: Nor do we read, that any were ever excommunicated about it; nor urg'd it as an indispensible Condition of enjoying the Ordinances of the *Gospel*.

8. It appears from the Apostle *Paul*, that when this Decree had a little gratify'd People, tenacious of Old Usages, and humour'd them into some handsome Compliance, it expir'd of Course (as to whatever Obligation arose from the Prohibition of Things in themselves indifferent) and lay among the Obsolete Canons not regarded. For, when the Reason of an Ecclesiastical Law ceases, the Law itself ceases, without any formal Repeal; which some expecting it shou'd have been more solemn, conceive in Force to this Day.

There is no Question, but those Churches going off from the Dregs of *Rome*, finding their People both ignorant, and obstinate, and extreamly averse to a thorough Reformation, did in Prudence leave them some of their Old little Toys, 'till they shou'd know better, and then they wou'd throw them away themselves. They who had suckt in *Popery* with their Mother's Milk, wou'd be very peevish, and wrangle unmercifully, to be wean'd all at once: Staid Nurses did therefore deal with them as they cou'd bear, expecting when they shou'd fall to more manly Food. But seeing by this Time, that they have either reach'd their End, or never will; and seeing the subtle Enemy of Purity and Peace wou'd prevent their Ends, if they be permitted quietly to expire and die of themselves (which they wou'd soon do, if not fetch'd again by their over officious Friends Importunity) the Protestant Religion wou'd have no Cause to bewail their Funerals.

The second Instance before mention'd, is in *Church-Government*. The short of it is thus much —— That *some* Church-Government is necessary, yet no particular Form necessary: As, whether it ought to be *Monarchical*, or *Aristocratical*; *Episcopal*, or *Consistorial*. This seems very dangerous Doctrine. For there, it seems, Episcopal Government is robb'd of its Old Pretence to *Jus Divinum*. And now the *Presbyterian* and *Congregational* Forms stand upon even Grounds with the *Prelatical*, saving in what this last has got the Advantage by *Law*. But here we are to understand, that his *Text*, and his *Marginal Reading* do strangely vary. For his Text reads thus —— *Few, or none will affirm, that either of these Forms* (Episcopal or Consistorial) *are necessary*. But his Margin reads thus—*I do not mean to weaken the Authority and Reputation of Episcopal Government, which I think to be best in itself, and Apostolical for its Antiquity*. Thus 1*st*, he tells us, That the Episcopal Mode is not necessary, and

and yet he does it not at all to *weaken its Reputation*, tho' it has been *hitherto reputed* to ſtand upon a Divine Bottom by our Learned Church-Men. But a Declaration contrary to the Fact has no more Credit with me, than it needs muſt.

But this is not the worſt, here ſeems to be an irreconcileable Contradiction. Epiſcopacy *is indifferent*, and yet *beſt in itſelf*: Not *Neceſſary*, and yet *Apoſtolical*. But let him make himſelf agree with himſelf whilſt I examine his Reaſoning.

Church-Government is *neceſſary in general*; but this, or that Form of Government in particular is *not neceſſary* (*not abſolutely neceſſary*) therefore ſome things not *neceſſary in themſelves are, or may be neceſſary to the Conſtitution, or Adminiſtration of a particular Church*. This, if I miſtake not much, is the whole Strength of this Period. To which I anſwer in theſe Particulars. 1. That tho' the Scripture does not trouble us with the Terms of Art, *Monarchical*, *Ariſtocratical*, *Democratical*, yet at leaſt, all the Officers belonging to the Church of *Chriſt* are there *ſpecially determin'd*; and from the Nature of the Officers, the Species, or particular Form of Government will of Neceſſity emerge. If the Officers of the particular Churches ſtand upon equal Ground one with another, the Government which reſults from that will be *Ariſtocratical*. If this be an Imparity and Subordination of the Governours of one Church to another, the Government which reſults from that will be *Monarchical*. And if the Churches govern'd by their reſpective Paſtors, are not knit together by ſome common Band, the Government will be denominated *Congregational*. 2. Suppoſing that the Government is only *commanded in general*, but the *particular Form not determin'd*, yet this will never conclude, that the Church may impoſe Things as Terms of Communion, which are not *commanded in general*. It can never follow, that a Church may *inſtitute*, and *impoſe* Ceremonies, for which there is *no general Warrant*, becauſe it muſt agree upon a Government for which there is *no general Warrant*: Nor that ſhe may impoſe thoſe things which are *not neceſſary*, neither to the *Conſtitution*, or *Adminiſtration* of a Church, becauſe ſhe muſt determine upon that which *is neceſſary*, both to the *Conſtitution* and *Adminiſtration* of it. 3. He pretends to prove, that it is *unlawful to ſeparate*, upon the Account of *unneceſſary Conditions* of Communion, and he gives us an Inſtance in *Epiſcopacy*, which yet his Margin affirms to be *beſt* in itſelf, and *Apoſtolical for Antiquity*. From hence we are inſtructed, That unneceſſary Conditions are ſuch as are, or may be *beſt in themſelves*. And let him, or you Doctor, or any other

other of your Party, produce such Terms of Communion, as being *unnecessary in themselves*, are yet *best in themselves*, and I am confident, there will be an End of this Controversy. If *Episcopal Government* be *best in itself*, how will he then conclude the Churches Power to impose indifferent Things, unnecessary Things, which are not best in themselves? But if Episcopal Government *be indifferent, and unnecessary in itself*, how is it best in itself, and of *Apostolical Antiquity*? An indifferent thing best in itself, an unnecessary *Apostolical Constitution*, is a Notion which sounds very harshly in my Ears, and certainly must in those of most Readers.

But we are all tir'd out with the Paralogisms, we have heard a great Clamour of *Schism*, *Schism*, as the Manner is, and when we come to enquire after the Reason, we are return'd with a *nihil dicit*, or which is all one, nothing to the Purpose.

I shall here put an End to this Epistle, worthy Doctor, with some Hints of the Subjects on which we shall address you in our subsequent. I shall, therefore, consider the several Ways your Party have propos'd for the Prevention of Church-Division. The *Papal* Methods, the keeping the People in Ignorance. An infallible Judge, &c. The Nature of the Things scrupl'd by the Dissenters, shewing, that there is no Necessity of sacrificing either Conscience, or Truth to Peace, which may be purchas'd at easier Rates, or else would be too dear. An Examination of that Principle, *That God lays very little Stress on Circumstantials in Religion*. Whether the Magistrate has Authority to determine such Externals in Religion, as are Matters of Dispute. In what Christian Liberty consists, and the *Dissenters* vindicated from that Insinuation (which you, and others of your Kidney have unjustly promoted) that they pretend by their Christian Charter to be discharg'd from their Obedience to Laws. Of a tender Conscience; what it is, and its Priviledges. And perhaps, some other Points not necessary now to enumerate. All which I recommend to your serious Perusal, because there is no Man has been more inveterate, or discover'd less Christian Moderation, than your self, which I presume, may proceed from your little Acquaintance with what the *Dissenters* have to say for themselves.

The End of the First LETTER.